

[Mr. KINGSTON addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. GEKAS] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. GEKAS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

### MEDICARE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of May 12, 1995, the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. PALLONE] is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I am in the well tonight because I feel very strongly that myself, the gentlewoman from Connecticut [Ms. DELAURO], the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. KLINK] and others that are going to be joining us here tonight, Democrats, spent a lot of time last year as well as this year as part of basically an effort to try to make the point, and I believe successfully made the point that the Republican leadership in this Congress was trying to destroy Medicare as we know it.

Democrats basically started Medicare over 30 years ago, Democratic Presidents, Democratic Congresses, because they were concerned that so many senior citizens did not have health care, either were not able to afford health insurance or found themselves unable to obtain health insurance as they became senior citizens. Over the last 30 years, Medicare has been very successful as a program in guaranteeing that almost all, almost 100 percent of the senior citizens in this country get health care and get good health care.

It is not only a question of the fact that they are covered by Medicare but they have a choice of physicians, they have a choice of hospitals and the level of coverage, what is included in their coverage, as well as the quality of care that they receive generally is pretty good. That is a dramatic change from the situation before Medicare existed.

Well, as my colleagues know, we faced a new Congress back in January of 1995 under the Republican leadership. One of the first things, and I have to admit I was very surprised, one of the first things that happened was that a budget was presented which essentially cut Medicare as well as Medicaid drastically, primarily to pay for tax cuts for tax breaks, if you will, mostly for wealthy Americans.

But the proposals that came from the Republican leadership did not just cut Medicare, did not just cut the amount of money that was going into Medicare, they also tried to change the system dramatically so that senior citizens would not have a choice of doctors. Many would be pushed into managed

care. Many would also find that they had to pay higher out-of-pocket costs because their part B premiums would go up or because they would have to pay more as a copayment to their physician.

What we saw is, as I said, a dramatic change in the structure of Medicare as well as drastic cuts in the amount of money that would go into the program. We fought hard against these Republican proposals, and we were successful. The Medicare program is today still the way it was 2 years ago. The dramatic cuts have not been implemented, and I suppose not surprisingly, because the Republican leadership realized at some point over the last 18 months that this was not working and that we were getting the message across, if you will, to the American public that this is what the Republican leadership wanted to do.

All of a sudden, we see where the Republicans do not want to talk about Medicare anymore. They sort of pretend like all these debates and all these votes, these many times when they tried to cut it and change it, never occurred. So I was not surprised that last week 3 House Republican leaders held a press conference, last Wednesday, to basically discuss the new ads that the AFL-CIO has been putting on the air in various parts of the country where they point out that Speaker GINGRICH and other Republican leaders were pushing for these Medicare cuts and basically changing. I would say actually destroying Medicare as we know it.

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The Republican leaders basically got up and said, oh, those things are not true, we never tried to do that. Well, let me tell Members that they did and regardless of their rhetoric, the old statement "Actions speak louder than words," well, the fact is the actions do speak louder than words in this case.

Whatever the Republicans say now, the bottom line is that after taking control of Congress, NEWT GINGRICH and the Republicans set themselves to the task of slashing Medicare by \$270 billion. If this Congress had passed and the President had signed, which we did not, their Medicare bill, seniors would have been forced out of traditional Medicare by making it prohibitively expensive to stay in the program. They would have been forced. Basically, they would have lost the choice, I should say, of their doctors and hospitals because essentially they would have been forced into managed care where they did not have the choice of doctors and hospitals.

I do not think anybody really should be surprised by this because we know well that it took something like 13 years for Democrats to overcome Republican opposition and enact the Medicare Program on July 30, 1965. And in 1965, 93 percent of the House Republicans, including then Representative Bob Dole, now the Republican candidate for President, voted for a sub-

stitute that would have killed Medicare as we know it. Over 60 percent of Republican Senators voted for a similar substitute.

So we know historically the Republicans were opposed to Medicare, they continued that effort when they took back the majority in this Congress, and regardless of what the Speaker or the now Presidential candidate Bob Dole says, the bottom line is that they have over the years consistently tried to either stop Medicare from becoming law or change it dramatically in a most negative way.

I would like to now yield to the gentlewoman from Connecticut [Ms. DELAURO] who really has been outspoken on this issue from the very beginning and really led the whole battle to make sure that we retain Medicare as it is and not make the drastic changes that the Republican leadership proposed.

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from New Jersey for taking the special order tonight because in fact the whole issue of Medicare is critically important to this Nation. I think, and I know my colleague from New Jersey feels this way and our other colleagues who are here tonight, the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. KLINK] and the gentleman from Illinois [Mr. DURBIN], also feel the same way, that Medicare represents not a program but in fact what our values are in this country, in that it says to people who have worked hard all of their lives, who have played by the rules, who have raised their families, who have contributed to the successful economy of this Nation, that when you retire and when you are a senior citizen that you will have a safe and a dignified and a decent retirement and that you will be able to have health care.

I thank my colleague from New Jersey for his efforts in talking about Medicare and also about health care for seniors in this country. He has led the fight on that issue and I thank him for laying out the fact that it used to be in 1946, or before Medicare that we did not have the opportunity for seniors to have health care. That meant that families had to take in their mothers or fathers or their loved ones and somehow work out health care and was not clear how that was going to get paid for. With the advent of Medicare and today in 1996, we are looking at 99 percent of seniors who are covered.

Let me just go back for a second because it was not 1946, but before Medicare only 46 percent of seniors had health care coverage. So Medicare has meant a difference in the lives of seniors today, and it is something they come to count on, and not as a handout but something that they have paid for and that is there for them now.

But I think it is very interesting that in this Congress, as has been pointed out, that there is a war that is being waged on Medicare. The Republican leadership, with the House Speaker NEWT GINGRICH at the helm, is truly